

# 5NT AS GRAND SLAM FORCE OR CHOICE OF SLAMS?

## QUESTION FROM GODWIN

I have seen 5NT being used as :-a) Choice of little slam (b) Grand slam try

Trying to understand the difference in ambiguous bidding situation. Can you explain when the 5NT bid takes each of these specific meanings?.

### Sridhar's views :

Josephine 5NT as a Grand slam force is an old tool that became popular before Key Card Blackwood was invented. It was convenient to check partner's quality of trumps, satisfy yourself there is no trump loser before you bid a Grand slam. For eg Partner opens 1S and you hold ♠QXX, ♥AKQXXX, ♦AXX, ♣VOID, you can bid 5NT to force to Grand slam if he has AK of Spades, you have no other worry.

However with the advent of KCB, the usefulness of 5NT as a tool to check trump honors became limited, the KCB bidders prefer 4N as it affords more space in bidding; often you have more requirements from Partner for bidding a Grand than trump honors alone. Consequently many experts use the 5NT bid for other purposes like choice of slams.

My recommendation is to use 5NT for Both (1) Grand slam force in specific situations, clearly discussed by the Partnership and (2) Choice of slams in other specific situations.

- (1) Grand slam Force Situations can include – (A) where KCB is not available eg Partner opens 3C and you have ♠AXX, ♥AX, ♦AKQXXX, ♣QX (B) Where you have a void and Voidwood responses might take bidding above 6 of the agreed suit inconveniently eg LHO opens 1S and bidding proceeds --(1S)- 2C-(3S)- ? You hold ♠VOID, ♥AXXX, ♦AKQXXX, ♣QXX.
- (2) Choice of slams Situations can include – (A) Where you are sure of playing in a Small Slam only and wish to explore suit fits before bidding 6N – eg Partner opens 1N (15-17), and you hold ♠AXX, ♥KQJ, ♦QJXX, ♣KJX – you are about to bid 6N, but partner can have a 5 card minor and ruffing potential like ♠QX ♥,XXX, ♦AKX, ♣AQXXX – here 6C is safer than 6N on a spade lead – so you bid 5N over 1N opening to ask partner to choose between 6N and 6 of minor should he hold a 5 card minor.

(B) where you hold a suit and wish to bid small slam in NT or your suit eg partner opens 2N (20-21), you hold ♠KX, ♥AQXXX, ♦KXX, ♣JXX, here you transfer to 3H (via 3D) and bid 5N, asking partner to bid 6H with 3 card support OR bid 6NT. Remember, if you had wanted to know about Heart Honors you would have transferred to 4H (via 4D) and then applied 4N –KCB.

(C) In competitive situations where you want partner to choose the trump suit at 6 Level eg LHO opens 3S and bidding proceeds - (3S)- 4N( minors)-(5S)-5N asks partner to choose between his minors at 6 level – it may be necessary to make your RHO the opening leader since your LHO, if put on lead may lead his singleton and obtain a ruff.

(3) Finally, in situations other than specified above you need 5N to inform partner about holding ALL key cards, but an inability to count 13 tricks and hence leaving it to partner – for eg, Spades have been agreed as trumps and a cue bidding sequence forced you to use 4N –KCB and you find partner's response has confirmed all Key cards, you still cannot decide on small slam Vs Grand slam – here you simply bid 5N and leave it to partner; again this needs partnership agreement as many play this as asking bid for Kings.

With best wishes,

Sridhar